

**Linking lawyers with those in need:  
Nonprofits gain legal assistance from new Law School program**

Since 1998, the number of public charities in Wisconsin grew by nearly 65 percent. Area leaders established several nonprofit support organizations. But one significant area of need remained: the provision of legal services tailored to nonprofits.

With the support of grants from the Helen Bader Foundation and the Pro Bono Initiative Fund of the State Bar of Wisconsin, the Law School has established the Milwaukee Legal Initiative for Nonprofit Corporations (M-LINC), a new program designed to serve the legal needs of nonprofit corporations in Wisconsin. Law students and practicing attorneys from across the state are “linked” to eligible nonprofit organizations in need of legal assistance. This is the only resource of its kind in Wisconsin, specifically focused on providing and coordinating pro bono legal advice to charities.

M-LINC, which has secured funding through 2010, also hosts educational programs on nonprofit legal issues and coordinates a clinical program each semester. The program capitalizes on the expertise of students and faculty at the Law School, and in some cases will draw upon the resources of the broader Marquette community, including the College of Business Administration, College of Professional Studies, and the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication. The Law School’s effort to develop and secure funding for the project has been led by Daniel A. Idzikowski, the school’s assistant dean for public service.

The Law School has appointed attorney Karin H. Werner as M-LINC’s director. Together with an advisory council, Werner leads law students who help administer the pro bono legal services program in a variety of ways, including assisting volunteer attorneys with research on pro bono cases and participating in the nonprofit clinic.

“My interest is in business law, so M-LINC provides the perfect opportunity to apply what I’ve learned in my classes to the real-world situations facing nonprofit organizations,” said Elizabeth Koller, a second-year law student and participant in the program. “We’re helping them so that they can continue helping others.”

Werner comes to the Law School after practicing corporate and tax law at two of the largest firms in New York City and Milwaukee during her tenure in corporate practice. She developed an expertise in the legal issues of nonprofit clients, working with one of the nation’s foremost experts on the topic. This experience positions her to be an effective liaison in pairing practicing attorneys with charities in need of assistance, as well as mentoring students in the program. Werner also co-teaches a nonprofit law course at the Law School.

“M-LINC fills a unique need in the community, as many nonprofits simply do not have the budget for legal assistance. Some organizations need only brief advice sessions, while others have more complex cases that require full legal representation. Attorneys and law firms throughout the state have already signed on to assist when needed,” said Werner. “Exposing students to different examples of public service in the legal profession is an important part of our mission.”

Nonprofits may inquire about pro bono legal services by contacting M-LINC at (414) 288-6331 or (888) 530-5462, and [www.nonprofitlinc.org](http://www.nonprofitlinc.org).